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Anschrift der Verfasser: Dr. Eberhard Matthies und Dr. C. Richter, Lehrstuhl für Industrietoxikologie, Martin-Luther-Universität, DDR-402 Halle, Leninallee 4

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE KURZMITTEILUNGEN

On a Dwarf Sperm Whale, Kogia simus (Owen, 1866), from the Sultanate of Oman

By M. D. Gallagher and P. J. H. van Bree

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On May 27, 1979, the first author of this note discovered the remains of a small odontocete below high water mark on the shelving sand beach near the entrance to the western creek of the Qurm mangrove swamp (Qurm Nature Reserve), near Muscat (23°37′ N, 57°58′ E), Sultanate of Oman. The specimen comprised the complete spinal column and tail, neatly cleaned of all flesh as if deliberately filleted, ribs in situ but devoid of any flesh, a large semi-detached mass of viscera, and a large bulbous mass, containing the skull but distended by the gases of decomposition. The remains rested on the sand, the head, partly macerated, was being attacked by crabs. The sex of the animal could not be determined.

The beach locality is not normally used by fishermen, but there are fishing boats which operate off shore from a few kilometres to the east and west. The odontocete may have been dealt with on shore, or it may have been flensed on board and the carcass thrown overboard to drift ashore. It was not possible to make any satisfactory measurements in view of the

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Fig. 1. Dorsal and ventral view of the skull of *Kogia simus* ♂ ad., ZMA 14.765, from Jeffry's Bay, South Africa. Total length of specimen 254 cm.
(J. Zaagman – ZMA fecit)

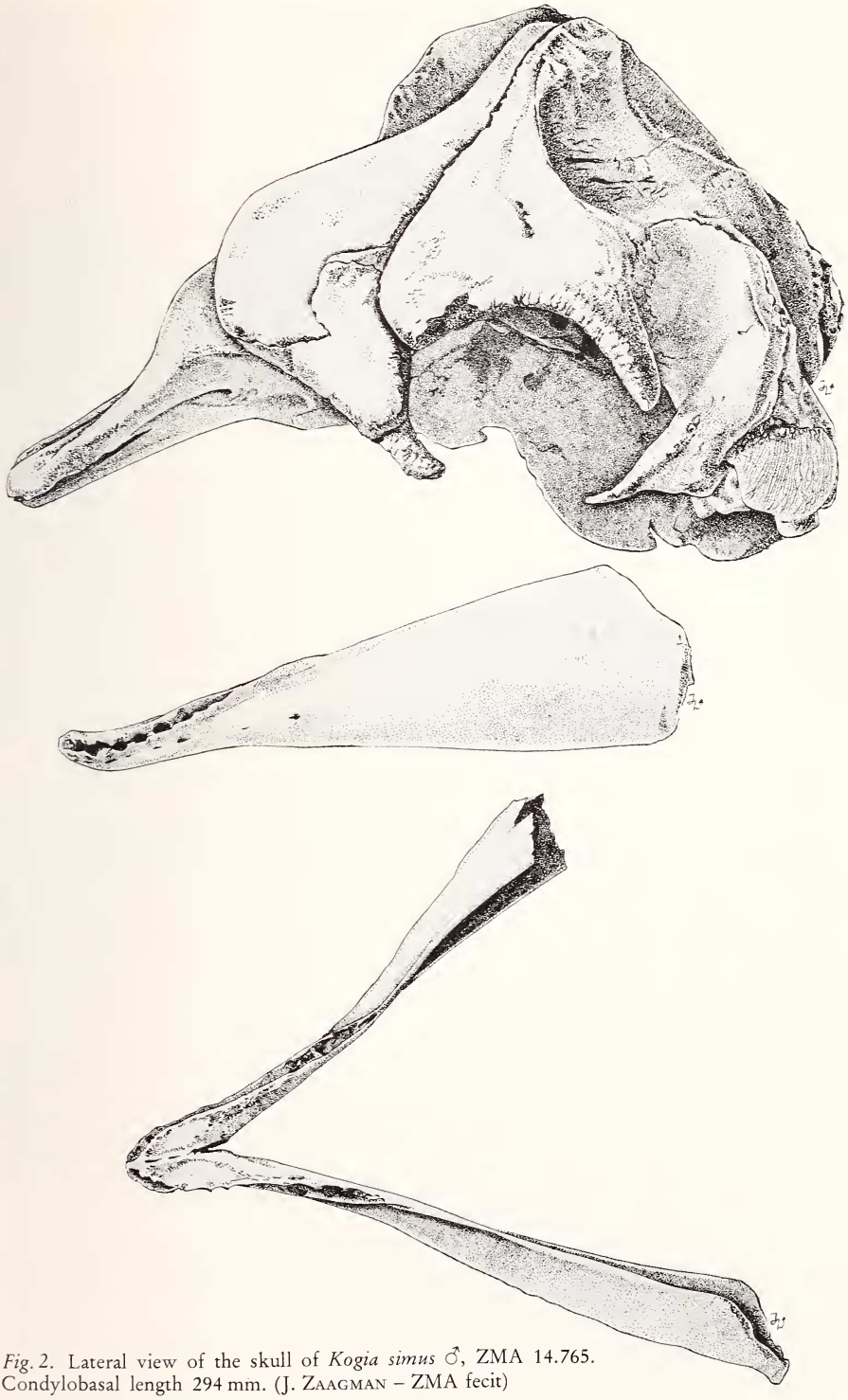

Fig. 2. Lateral view of the skull of *Kogia simus* ♂, ZMA 14.765. Condylobasal length 294 mm. (J. Zaagman – ZMA fecit)

condition of the animal and the fact that the backbone was curved, but its total length was estimated to be at least 7 feet (216 cm).

The almost complete skull was collected from the animal, as well as one scapula, the sternum, the hyoid bones, and one rib. The skull and single bones were cleaned and sent to the Amsterdam Zoological Museum where the second author identified the remains as belonging to a fullgrown Dwarf Sperm Whale, *Kogia simus* (Owen, 1866). The remains are now registered under number ZMA 20.712. As records of both species of the genus *Kogia* from the Indian Ocean are very rare, the find of a specimen of *K. simus* is worth reporting.

Of the skull the following measurements (in mm) were taken (the values between brackets are the measurements expressed as percentages of the total length of the skull). For the way the measurements were taken, we refer to Ross (1979). Total length of the skull 282 (100), rostrum length 110 (39.0), rostrum, basal width 131 (46.4), rostrum, width at its middle 91 (32.3), breadth across pre-orbital angles of supra-orbital processes 250 (88.6), breadth across post-orbital angles of supra-orbital processes 274 (97.2), zygomatic width 257 (91.1), height to vertex 207 (73.4), width of vertex 13 (4.6), width of supra-occipital at narrowest part between posterior margins of temporal fossae 179 (63.4), tip rostrum to left bony nares 121 (42.9), height to ventral border of foramen magnum 72 (25.5), length maxillary toothgroove – right – (-), length maxillary toothgroove – left 96 (34.0), width outer margins occipital condyles 88 (31.2), tip rostrum to hind margins pterygoids 152 (53.9), length of mandible 242 (85.8), number of mandibular alveoli 8 – 8 (the teeth could not be found in the rotting mass of flesh and bones), height mandible at coronoid 72 (25.5), length symphysis mandibles 40 (14.2), length lower tooth row – left 90 (31.9), and length lower tooth row – right 90 (31.9).

As stated already, only a few strandings or captures of animals of the genus *Kogia* are known from the Indian Ocean and adjacent waters. The holotype of *Kogia breviceps* (de Blainville, 1838), the Pygmy Sperm Whale, a skull, was collected at Cape of Good Hope in 1837. The next specimen, the holotype of *Kogia simus,* was found at Waltair (17°45′ N, 83°25′ E) near Vishakhapatnam, India, on 1-III-1853. Although Owen (1866) described his *simus* from Waltair clearly as a taxon different from *breviceps,* until Handley published his revision in 1966, *simus* was nevertheless considered a junior synonym of *breviceps.*

Bullen (1898) reported on five "short-headed cachalots" harpooned near the Aldabra Islands at about 1875; whether they were Pygmy Sperm Whales or Dwarf Sperm Whales is not known. The fact, however, that they yielded seven barrels of blubber each, points to the larger species *breviceps.* Sclater (1901) mentioned two specimens of *K. breviceps* stranded at Buffels Bay, Knysna (34°04′ S, 23°00′ E) in 1880, and at Green Point, Table Bay (34°04′ S, 18°24′ E) in 1899 (see also Ross 1979). On 8-III-1900, Weber (1923) found on the beach near the whaling village of Lamararap on the Indonesian island of Lomblen (08°31′ N, 123°29′ E) a skull without mandibles and a part of another skull of an odontocete, which he called *K. breviceps.* They are, however, specimens of *K. simus* (van Bree and Duguy 1967).

Pillay (1926) enumerated a gravid female of about 10 feet found at Trivandrum (08°41′ N, 76°57′ E), India, in February 1926; in view of its size (10 ft = 304.8 cm), the author is most probably correct in naming the animal *Kogia breviceps.* A young female Dwarf Sperm Whale was stranded in the neighbourhood of Leighton Beach, near Fremantle, the port of Perth (31°58′ S, 115°49′ E), Australia, on September 19, 1959 (Hale 1963). And Ross (1979) published a detailed and most useful study concerning 64 strandings (up to 1975) of Pygmy and Dwarf Sperm Whales on the coasts of South Africa from Saldanha Bay (33°00′ S, 17°56′ E) to East London (33°00′ S, 27°54′ E).

From the foregoing review it would appear that the two species are rare in the Indian Ocean, the coastal waters of South Africa excepted. But it is also conceivable that the lack of people interested in cetaceans, other than as sources of food, on the three sides of the Indian Ocean, is the real cause that so little is known. And perhaps also the lack of adequate literature one can use to identify stranded specimens might be a factor. It is outside the scope of this faunistic note to publish an identification key (for that we refer to Handley 1966), but to

facilitate the recognition of skulls of *Kogia simus* we hereby reproduce a series of drawings of a skull present in the Amsterdam collection.

Both authors of this note gratefully acknowledge the help received from the authorities of the Sultanate of Oman.

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Authors' addresses: Major M. D. Gallagher, c/o Lloyd's Bank Ltd., 6 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5NH, Great Britain; Dr P. J. H. van Bree, Institute of Taxonomic Zoology (Zoological Museum), Plantage Kerklaan 36, 1018 CZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Observations on reproduction in Mus musculus L. in Rangoon[1]

By D. W. Walton, R. E. King, J. E. Brooks and H. Naing

Rodent Control Demonstration Unit, World Health Organization, Rangoon, Burma

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In Rangoon, *Mus musculus* is of the commensal, dark bellied type within the *castaneus* group as defined by Marshall (1977). As part of the commensal small mammal fauna of Rangoon, it occurs with several other species: *Rattus exulans, R. rattus, R. norvegicus, Bandicota bengalensis, B. indica* and *Suncus murinus*. During a survey of urban small mammals in Rangoon specimens of this species were captured, primarily from houses, shops and grain storage warehouses. The survey was conducted by the Rodent Control Demonstration Unit of the World Health Organization in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Burma.

Animals were captured in locally-made wooden live traps, wire mesh traps and by break-back traps. Generally the wooden live traps were too large to be effectively operated by the small mice, so the majority of captures were by means of the other two trap types. Whether alive or dead at capture, the mice

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